

National Operatic & Dramatic Association

London Area Report



Society
Production
Date
Venue
Report by

FARINGDON DRAMATIC SOCIETY

My thanks to Karen Whiffen, your secretary for your invitation, which was part of your 60th celebration. As stated in your programme, this was the sequel to Lark Rise which you performed at the celebration of 50 years of your Society. I was fortunate to be present at that event also. The Director then was Dave Headey, assisted by Carolyn Taylor. It was interesting to note that eight members of the 50th anniversary were now very much involved on stage with the 60th anniversary event. Long may you be associated with the Society.

Director – Debbie Lock – had given this production much thought in the planning stages. Her vision of the show was excellent, and to have done it in the “round2 was a great success. The eight Musicians, playing on the stage were a joy to listen to, and so much in keeping with the style of the late 1800s. Congratulations to all of you.

The play moved with pace, and everyone seemed very confident with what they were doing. It is not that easy for any actor, when you are so close to your audience. The three people involved with moving the props on and off the stage, did so with precision and a minimum of fuss, and they were appropriately dressed. Well done.

This play had a large cast, and unfortunately I cannot comment on each character. However I can say there were no weak links in the production, and everyone was alert to their character, and seemed as if they were enjoying what they were doing.

The Principal Characters:

Laura Timms – Clare Matthews - .gave a very convincing performance, good clear diction, and made good use of the “open stage”, was relaxed in all she did, and her previous experience in youth drama was evident. Well done.

Dorcas Lane – Amanda Linstead – a polished performance from an experienced actor.

Looked good on stage, and her timing and deliverance of the spoken word was superb.

Zillah – Carolyn Taylor – another fine performance from a very experienced member of the Society. Showed many of the facets of her experience to good effect, from both body language to facial expressions. She seemed to have thoroughly enjoyed playing the character. Well done.

Bavour – Allan Dover; Solomon – Richard Lock; Bill – Gary Field – I do not wish to separate these three actors, as they worked so well as a “team”. Their singing was clear and melodious, and some of their antics and facial expressions brought a smile to the faces of the audience – especially the bath scene!! Good performances from you all.

Mrs Gubbins – Karen Whiffen – came over well to the audience in her character part, and seemed to be enjoying being the nosey parker of the village. In Lark Rise she was Mrs

Beamish – now she had moved onwards, and upwards! Made good use of her facial

expressions, and I was flattered to be asked by her, to accompany her in the final “Knees-up”! Thomas Brown, Sir Austin – Adrian Wells – a man of many parts, again in Lark Rise he played three characters – Pumpkin, Sharman and Jerry Parrish. Very versatile on stage, good diction, and he made good use of the stage.

As stated previously, everyone worked as a team, and the detail that was put into some of the scenes was excellent, eg the Hunt (the way the horses were ridden, the stroking of the mane) and the Hunt Ball – the minute detail is so important.

I cannot let this show pass without making reference to Looney Joe – Katie Dyet – there is only one word to describe her character role – BRILLIANT. She must have practiced for hours in front of a mirror – her facial expressions, her hand and leg movements, and the way she tried to copy other people’s gestures was unforgettable. I wonder if she had studied someone who was deaf and dumb.

Sitting so close to the actors obviously means that one can pick up much closer various detail of clothing etc – you are so fortunate in your Society of having two such talented Costume Designers – Jeni Summerfield and Joan Lee – for every show they produce such authentic costumes, and this show was no exception. There was no reference to Make Up in the programme. I felt that the three working at the anvil would not have been so clean, and Bavour’s T-shirt was an excellent advertisement for one of the washing powders – brilliant white! Mr Chitty – Dave Headey had a wonderful array of medals, but I wasn’t aware that NODA had awarded 25 year service awards in the 1800s (considering they were founded in 1899).

The Set – designed by Jo Webster – another experienced “back room” campaigner – ideal set. I liked the detail of the snow on the window panes, and the smithy. Well constructed by your team of helpers.

The Programme – Dave Headey – this contained all the relevant detail for the audience, on good quality paper, and easy to read.

This was another interesting evenings entertainment, enjoyed by a full house, and the climax of the 60th anniversary.

Your Society can look back on another successful year, and Director – Debbie Lock, and her Assistant Director – Dave Headey and Musical Director – Carol Warren – have contributed to this success.